

Carlyle's Lectures on Literature: a Note respecting the various Manuscripts.

THE issue of two editions of a hitherto unpublished series of Lectures by Thomas Carlyle, within a few weeks of each other, affords a suitable opportunity for placing on record several curious circumstances in the history of the manuscript, which have chanced to come within my own experience, and may serve as notes towards the bibliography of this long dormant work. About four-and-twenty years ago, a provincial bookseller was offered (by a clergyman living in Ireland) the manuscript of an unpublished series of lectures by Thomas Carlyle, and having come to terms with his correspondent, obtained it. On its arrival, it proved to be a report of eleven out of twelve of the series of lectures on the History of Literature, delivered by Carlyle in 1838, the ninth lecture of the series being unaccountably missing.

His first thought was to offer them to Carlyle's publishers Messrs. Chapman and Hall, but he received no encouragement from them—they replied, in fact, that no doubt Mr. Carlyle had a transcript of them, and that they did not care about the MS.—they would give five pounds or so for it, to keep it out of other hands, beyond that they were not prepared to treat.

Under the circumstances, the bookseller, after warily obtaining a copy of the MS. to keep by him, catalogued and sold the original. Two or three days afterwards, during his absence at a sale, another order came in for the "Lectures," and an assistant (now a prominent bookseller in one of the great provincial centres,) unwittingly sold the second copy. Thus ended the history of the unpublished "Carlyle" for some years. Several years afterwards, however, the bookseller told the story of the two Carlyle manuscripts to the present writer, and, singular to relate, on the very next day a letter was received from the purchaser of one of the MSS., asking the bookseller to take it back and allow for it as much as he thought

fit. This he very gladly agreed to do, and when the MS. arrived, it proved to be the copy which the bookseller had made himself, which his former assistant had sold in his absence. This time the bookseller determined that he would not allow the lectures to go out of his possession. He, therefore, caused another copy to be made of the MS., which soon found a purchaser, the bookseller retaining the earlier copy for himself. This occurred in 1873, and the duplicate copy remained in the hands of the bookseller until after Carlyle's death, when its owner, thinking an opportune time had arrived for the profitable disposal of the third copy of the "Lectures," (or rather the *second* in point of time) catalogued it, and very speedily found a purchaser in the person of an eminent literary man, who shortly afterwards contributed an outline of the series of Lectures to the *Nineteenth Century*.

More than ten years elapsed before any further step was taken to make the lectures more widely known. In February of the present year, however, they were "now printed for the first time," with a preface and notes by Professor J. Reay Greene, and published by Messrs. Ellis and Elvey. The editor, in the preface, stated that at the time the lectures were delivered, "full reports . . . were taken by the late Mr. Thomas Chisholm Anstey, Barrister-at-law, and subsequently Member of Parliament for Youghal." He further says: "Mr. Anstey had copies of these reports made by a few friends. Three such copies are known to exist. One, the property of the publishers, has been compared with a second copy kindly placed at their disposal by Professor Dowden. . . . The two MS., although the work of different hands, give concordant readings throughout. The original MS. in Mr. Anstey's handwriting is now the property of the Asiatic Society, Bombay, who acquired it at his death." It appeared that from some cause Mr. Anstey had been unable to attend the ninth lecture of the course, hence its omission from the manuscripts referred to, which doubtless owed their existence, in the first instance, to one of the transcripts of Mr. Anstey's report.

Two or three weeks after Professor Greene's edition appeared, another edition of the lectures, agreeing with its predecessor in its omission of the ninth lecture, was published by Messrs. Curwen, Kane & Co., at Bombay, and at the *Times of India* Office in London, having an introduction and notes by R. P. Karkaria, and purporting to have been printed from

Anstey's original MS. The second editor, in his preface, refers to Professor Reay Greene's edition as "a blundering one, omitting some words to be found in the Anstey MS.," and declares that "its readings are distinctly inferior to the latter."

In the hope of throwing some light on the existence of these "blundering and inferior copies" (if such they are), I have penned this note, which may interest some readers of the LIBRARY, as a contribution to the history and adventures of one of the works of Carlyle which remained in its manuscript dress for upwards of half-a-century. I do not doubt that both the copies used in the preparation of Professor Reay Greene's edition of the lectures were due to the enterprise of my bookselling friend in making a Carlyle manuscript go as far—and bring as much grist to the mill—as possible.

R. CADE.

